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## Cultural value and cultural policy: some evidence from the world of live music

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This article considers live music policy in relation to wider debates on the cultural (as opposed to instrumental) value of the arts. The findings are based on research into amateur/enthusiast, state-funded and commercial concerts across a range of genres – classical, traditional folk, jazz, singer-songwriter and indie – using the Edinburgh Queen’s Hall venue as a case study. We argue that (1) articulations of the cultural or intrinsic value of live music across genres tend to lapse back into descriptions of instrumental value; (2) although explanations vary from audiences, artists and promoters as to why they participate in live music, they also share certain characteristics across genres and sometimes challenge stereotypes about genre-specific behaviours; and (3) there are lessons to be learned for live music policy from examining a venue that plays host to a range of genres and promotional practices.

**Keywords:** live music; regulation; cultural value; audience research; music policy

### Introduction

This article discusses the findings from a project funded by the UK’s Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) which examines the cultural value of live music and builds on a growing body of research on the British live music sector (see, e.g. Frith 2007, Brennan and Webster 2011, Cloonan 2011, Frith *et al.* 2013, Behr *et al.* 2014). It is also part of a broader AHRC project on Cultural Value, which aims to ‘establish a framework that will advance the way in which we talk about the value of cultural engagement and the methods by which we evaluate that value ... [beginning with] an examination of the cultural experience itself and its impact on individuals and its benefit to society’ (AHRC 2013).

In the last decade, the live music sector has become a crucial source of revenue for the music industries as old revenue streams (namely sales of physical recorded music) have declined (Page and Carey 2011). But since 2008, the ascendant trajectory of the commercial live music sector has coincided with a period of austerity and spending cuts by the UK government; publicly funded arts organisations, many of which promote and develop live music, have come under increasing pressure to justify their cultural value or face having their funding cut. The pressure to translate

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cultural activity into economic value has a longer history, resulting in the problem of ‘energies [being] directed into chasing funding and collecting evidence rather than achieving cultural purposes. In the search for outcomes and ancillary benefits, the essence of culture has been lost’ (Holden 2004, p. 20). The result is that arts’ organisations have tended to produce studies attempting to demonstrate their economic impact ‘in terms of jobs created and value added’, but have been less successful at measuring the ‘intrinsic value created as part of their core missions’ (Bakhshi 2012, p. 2). The commercial sector is similarly focused on establishing its economic worth, as a recent study commissioned by trade association UK Music indicates (UK Music 2013). These two trends – the growth of the commercial live music sector on the one hand and closer scrutiny of public funding for live and other cultural events on the other – have led to live music becoming an emerging area of focus for policymakers. As Cloonan (2011) has noted, arguments about regulation (and deregulation) of live events, the black economy and concert ticketing are all areas of concern for policymakers. This article focuses on a fourth area of concern – the cultural value of live music. What kind of value do promoters, performers and audiences derive from participating in live music? How can qualitative research into the cultural experience of live music be used to complement existing research that seeks to build and develop audiences? How might research into the non-economic value of live music be used by policymakers as well as the stakeholders listed above?

We explored these questions via a case study of the Queen’s Hall in Edinburgh, a 900-capacity venue which hosts approximately 200 performances of live music a year across all musical genres. It receives some subsidy from Edinburgh City Council and is the home of the Scottish Government-funded Scottish Chamber Orchestra (SCO). However, it also relies on commercial income from venue hire by amateur and semi-professional artists, the Edinburgh International Festival and by Scotland’s biggest commercial promoters. It was therefore an ideal case study to consider how cultural value is generated across different spheres of promotion. Here, we draw on Frith *et al.*’s tri-partite classification of concert promoters as ‘enthusiast’, ‘state-funded’ and ‘commercial’. As they note, ‘[i]n this model, the enthusiast promoters [put on shows] because they want to... The state promotes live music via subsidy and for policy reasons – educational, cultural, social and economic. The commercial promoter puts on concerts to make money’ (Frith *et al.* 2013, p. 15). We also selected case study concerts across a range of genres – classical, traditional folk, jazz, singer-songwriter and indie. We therefore deliberately broadened the focus of traditional studies of cultural value to determine the extent to which the criteria for cultural value are shared across different music genres and different models of concert promotion.

At the root of the research, and informing both our questions and the understanding of many of the research participants is a conception of ‘intrinsic’ value – *ars gratia artis* – as against an ‘instrumentally’ adduced case for the arts. This has a political history, current policy backdrop and ramifications both specific to our case study venue and which, as we shall show, can be extrapolated outwards from this to make wider policy related points. It is worth noting that the distinctive placement of the Queen’s Hall across commercial and state subsidised sectors makes the aggregate of stakeholders therein particularly illustrative of these broader ‘theoretical’ conceptions of value, more than either strictly commercially driven or entirely subsidised actors.

The political history and backdrop to these questions therefore informed not only our own research questions, but also the professional and personal considerations of key respondents – particularly those at the venue itself – for whom they form central aspects of their working lives (e.g. in fundraising, negotiating with local and Scottish governmental bodies and in balancing commercial considerations against their more ‘creative’ cultural remit). Before examining the ways in which our respondents described – or, more accurately, attempted to describe – the cultural value of live music at the Queen’s Hall, the context of the discussions and the concepts underpinning them warrant some examination.

### **Intrinsic vs. instrumental value**

The central question regarding arts funding concerns *why* they are of value, and the related matter of why they should be supported. Numerous cases can and have been made for the various positive effects of cultural activity (e.g. economic growth, mental health, urban regeneration and civic pride) – in other words ‘instrumental’ values brought about by the ‘use’ of a core good. The other side of the coin is that there is something *within* such activities that bring these benefits about, and the case that this ‘intrinsic’ value merits support not just as the source of secondary benefits but in and of itself.

In the UK, government cuts since 2010 have put pressure on the arts at large and brought to the fore longstanding tensions at the heart of discussions regarding arts funding over what kind of benefits derive from such funding. These, however, are not always clearly distinguishable from tensions *within* the arts – notably those regarding ‘value’ and what is deemed worthy of support – often expressed in terms of ‘high’ and ‘low’ (or popular) culture and which go back to the roots of state subsidy for the arts.

The Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts (CEMA) was set up in 1940 to support British culture and became the Arts Council of Great Britain in 1946, when it also received its first Royal Charter. While the roots of local authority promotion in the arts go back to the mid nineteenth century (Frith *et al.* 2013, p. 41), direct involvement from the state at national level was a major step. This was noted by the Arts Council’s first chair, John Maynard Keynes, who noted that ‘I do not believe it is yet realized what an important thing has happened. State patronage of the arts has crept in. It has happened in a very informal unostentatious way – half-baked if you like’ (cited Frith *et al.* 2013, p. 41).

The post-war settlement which Keynes’ ideas helped to inspire has been undermined by the rise of neo-liberalism and a concomitant questioning of the role of the state in the provision of a range of services, including the arts. In the latter case, the arguments boil down to whether the state should fund artistic activity as good in itself or because of the benefits which accrue from it. In other words, should art be funded for its intrinsic or instrumental value? The difficulty for policymakers and practitioners alike has been how to reconcile these two competing (if overlapping) narratives of arts funding.

The roots of the Arts Council also suggest tensions between what ‘the market’ would support and aesthetic ‘value’. While CEMA leant towards ‘the highest standards in the arts of music, drama and painting’ (Frith *et al.* 2013, p. 46), it also worked towards providing popular entertainment for troops and factory workers, a

strand that fell away when it became the Arts Council where the emphasis was firmly upon 'high' art with folk and popular forms absented from its early support.

This has had ramifications for how arts funding has been discussed since with the key question being: Is the role of state funding solely to shore up those forms that cannot survive in the market alone? Here, in the relationship between the state and the arts, it is easy to fall into an opposition between excellence (intrinsic worth) and democratic urges (populism) – between – to follow John Street's example – Beethoven and banjo playing: 'the problem with these distinctions is not that any such distinction is invalid (on the grounds that that all taste is subjective), but rather that they reproduce traditional and unexamined judgments and fail to consider alternative grounds for discernment. The difficulty is not the distinction, but what it is based upon' (2011, p. 389).

In other words, the question of what type of art to support is putting the cart before the horse. State arts policy is *policy* first and imbued with political values, which need to be examined against competing, or at least different, values in relation to the arts, popular or otherwise. Categories such as 'high' and 'low', 'popular' and 'excellent' are interdependent, drawing upon and infusing one another, from subject matter to aesthetic techniques. Following Dworkin, Street deploys the analogy of language, where enrichment – regardless of its origin – provides potential benefits all around. As he puts it: 'It is the structure of culture that provides the grounds for subsidy, not the specific content' (Street 2011, p. 392).

The heart of the problem remains that the discussion often remains mired in an opposition between intrinsic and instrumental values. We may be persuaded of the value of, to follow Dworkin and Street, innovation and originality but there may be difficult contingencies on the ground relating to how those are accounted for by the purse-holders who may still need persuading that innovative and original artistic endeavour merits support.

Notions of 'instrumentalism' become complicated here and are often couched in stark economic terms. Speeches in 2013 by Maria Miller, then UK Secretary of State for Culture, and Fiona Hyslop, Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs in the Scottish Government, seemingly illustrated an important divide. The arts, suggested Miller (2013), need to accept the 'fundamental premise' in straitened times that limited resources mean they have to argue for the economic contribution that they make – a return on investment, in the language of business. In contradistinction to this instrumentalist view, Hyslop (2013) argued for the intrinsic value of the arts, not least in helping to define and shape a national identity, and a 'strong belief that culture and heritage are an intrinsic and a public good that should be celebrated, nurtured and treasured'. While her speech also trumpeted the economic contribution of the arts, Hyslop also pointed towards their social benefits and the need for *access* to them.

To move beyond hard-headed economic criteria would require an alternative value system which avoids collapsing back into the patrician model. There are hints of this in Andrew Pinnock's critique of a purely Keynesian conception of funding. This, he suggests, allows scant 'room for diversity of (acceptable) opinion about the quality of one and the same art offering because disputes are expected to end in 'victory' for someone or other; only for different opinions about different sorts of art strongly and by definition correctly held by independent value judges each operating unchallengeably in their own areas of special or supposed expertise' (2006, p. 178). While his call for art funders (specifically the Arts Council) to join

the discussions about the social *uses* of art (Pinnock 2006, p. 178) still retains an instrumental criterion, it does move beyond a bluntly financial version of it.

Such a move also potentially allows for a re-examination of the quandary of 'excellence' vs. 'populism', which are mainly problematic if 'the arts', 'society' and 'policy' are looked at as separate entities. In fact while they are certainly distinct, they are not mutually exclusive and there are a number of means of trying to disentangle aesthetic evaluation from cultural value. Part of the problem is that getting at cultural value involves disentangling instrumental values from intrinsic ones or at a minimum working out the different ways in which they use *language*. Eleanor Belfiore (2012) argues that this problem has been compounded by the previous UK government's policy of what she calls 'defensive instrumentalism'. Under New Labour, she claims, an age-old humanistic tradition whereby the arts were defended against critics who attacked their potential for causing disorder (from Plato onwards), was continued but without the concomitant argument that within them was the potential for positive effects on the individuals, interactions and discourses that constitute a society. In their place was a more mechanistic defense that referred not to nature of the arts, but to their specific *impacts*. This, suggests Belfiore, is partly why the arts have ended up without an ideological defence when the case is made for a purely economic rationale (Belfiore 2012, p. 107).

The problem with looking for intrinsic value is that it can become like splitting the cultural atom – every move away from a perceived instrumental value, reveals another subatomic particle of use value of some sort. Certainly, as will be shown, our respondents struggled to articulate a language of quantifiable intrinsic value. To unhook the discussion from defensive instrumentalism without trying to square the circle – or quantify the qualitative – may necessitate the articulation of a position *between* (or outside) the intrinsic and the instrumental.

Dave O'Brien suggests accepting that 'the division between intrinsic and instrumental uses of culture, which are the basis for much discussion of cultural value, is potentially unhelpful and misleading' (2010, p. 48). He proposes a 'pragmatic approach' (O'Brien 2010, p. 48) that looks towards the treasury's Green Book and adopts its language – in other words, economic language. This goes back to Miller's account, until a move outside of the cultural funding argument to look at the other factors at play. O'Brien's main point seems to be that it is not necessarily the economic arguments in terms of market benefits that should be utilised but the *language* of economics. He cites other areas of policy – such as health and the environment – that have evolved valuation tools that speak to mainstream policy and have entered its lexicon of appraisal (O'Brien 2010, p. 4).

The key is an understanding of nuance and, as well as a pragmatic approach, an understanding that there is a core aesthetic value at the root of the benefits. This requires a concept that is not necessarily a Platonic ideal of value, but instead resides in the interplay between various factors. Belfiore and Bennett (2007), for instance, point towards different 'determinants of impact' that could be used to add depth to a pragmatic approach. They make note of multiple factors that shape the aesthetic experience and which point towards the need for incorporating a sense of the multidimensional nature (Belfiore and Bennett 2007, p. 238) of our encounters with culture.

In this respect, the struggle of our respondents to articulate intrinsic value allows us to utilise their differing individual articulations. Rather than attempt to measure 'cultural value' as a thing in itself, the approach should be reoriented towards an empirical assessment of how audiences, promoters, venue staff and



musicians go about *valuing* the musical experience. As Frith (2013) points out, ‘policy makers don’t make music, musicians do... Music is not made by the rational economic individual fantasised by market theorists; musical experience is not conducive to rational or bureaucratic planning, to auditing, measuring, etc’.

Belfiore’s and Bennett’s determinants almost constitute a micro-ecology of aesthetic experience. This is not reducible to an atomic nucleus any more than the live music experience is reducible to solely the artist, venue or audience member. What can be taken from their outline of multidimensionality, and from O’Brien’s call for pragmatism, is that cultural value operates in a manner akin to the relationship between Frith’s irrational actors (at the micro level) and the planning, licensing and physical environments in which they operate (the macro). A productive assessment of it entails looking towards the way in which the agents in the wider ecology express and articulate their experiences, gains and losses (psychological, social, financial and cultural).

In summary, then, intrinsic value is extremely difficult to quantify. Yet the language of quantification should not be restricted to economic criteria, as has tended to be the case in the arts. And while individual expressions of value are hard to fit into more pragmatic language – this can be ameliorated with a shift of emphasis towards the experiences of participants, away from a conception of ‘value’ as an abstract good contained within live music to a greater or lesser degree. In the end, rather than trying to quantify intrinsic value, it may be more fruitful to seek to understand how various actors perceive it; in other words, how people have perceptions and beliefs about the intrinsic value of music. We suggest that those perceptions and beliefs need to be taken into account more by policy makers. Therefore, it makes sense to move away from unpicking value as an end itself and towards an analysis of how people ascribe value – de-emphasising the noun ‘value’ and focusing on *the act of valuing*. To this end, we move now to the different expressions of the live music experience, and its wider effects, at the Queen’s Hall.

### **Case study: the cultural value of live music at the Queen’s Hall**

There are many different kinds of people who are pulled into the orbit of a concert venue. On the supply side are the promoters, managers, agents, production crew and the performers. There are also intermediaries, the venue and its staff ranging from management and marketing to ushers, bar staff, security and catering. Last but not least is the audience, who may include friends of the artists, paying customers, and journalists assigned to review the show. We analysed how the above stakeholders articulated the cultural value of live music by collecting responses via a range of methods: (1) reflective diaries from volunteer audience members on their experience in the week preceding and following the case study concerts; (2) interviews with performers, promoters and venue staff; (3) analysis of publicly available comment in press and social media on the concerts; (4) in-venue and online surveys; and (5) a focus group involving audience members from the different case study concerts comparing their experiences of live music. We selected six case study concerts occurring at the venue during the span of the project (September to December 2013) to capture the diversity of programming at the Queen’s Hall. First were Scottish traditional folk and accordion duo Aly Bain and Phil Cunningham. Second was the Scottish National Jazz Orchestra (SNJO), who performed a concert featuring Branford Marsalis. The third and fourth concerts both featured the Hall’s

resident ensemble, the SCO. The fifth concert was a gig with indie band They Might Be Giants. The final concert was by Edinburgh-based folk singer-songwriter Heidi Talbot. In this section, we first draw on data from reflective diaries, open-ended survey responses and the focus group to identify axes of how audiences experience value at live music events. Second, we analyse quantitative responses from the audience questionnaires. Third, we outline how the Queen's Hall fits into Edinburgh's wider live music venue ecology.

The concerts listed above were chosen not simply because they represented the range of genres hosted by the Queen's Hall, but also because they represented a range of promotional practices. The Bain-Cunningham show was an in-house promotion by the Queen's Hall as a commercial endeavour. They Might Be Giants was also a commercial event, but promoted by an external company, Regular Music. The SNJO and its activities are funded in part by Creative Scotland (formerly the Scottish Arts Council), while the SCO and its activities are directly funded by the Scottish Government. Finally, the Heidi Talbot concert was promoted by David Heavonor, a staff member at the Queen's Hall who is also a songwriter and enthusiast promoter. In this way, we not only managed to cover a range of musical genres but also a range of models of concert promotion – enthusiast, state-funded, commercial, and overlaps between these categories. Additionally, in illustrating the responses of different generic stakeholders within the same space, the use of the Queen's Hall as a case study allowed us to focus on experiential transactions pertaining to live music as a cultural activity in a broad sense, rather than as mediated by conventions to specific types of music and their 'typical' environs.<sup>1</sup>

Our research focused on how audiences, artists and other participants in live music value their experience in different genres and across different models of concert promotion. Our emphasis here is primarily on audiences, although it is worth noting that similar differences across genre discourses were evident in interviews with commercial, state and enthusiast promoters.<sup>2</sup> We begin with audience responses from the reflective diaries, focus group and open-ended response sections of the survey. These afforded a rich dataset of responses from different audience groups but illustrated more than anything that 'cultural value' accrues in aggregate rather than in a set of individually ascribable experiential transactions that can be translated across different types of concert. Much of what stood out most from diaries, for instance, was the variety of individual personalities filling them out. To this end, it is difficult to make overarching generalisations. The key differences were discursive – i.e. relating to *how* the musical experience was valued – and occurred between genres (classical, folk, pop/rock) rather than other substantive factors. Rather than placing different *levels* of value on the experience itself, they refer to different spectrums of value – e.g. music as a 'serious' or 'spiritual' activity, against music as 'entertainment' or a 'communal' activity. These different discourses were, broadly, also exhibited by the participants in the focus group and, albeit less clearly, in the qualitative answers to the surveys. Nevertheless, across the participants – and data gathering methods – recurring spectra of 'values' occurred which could be said to apply across them.

In this section, then, the case study concerts are studied in two parts. First, the reflective diaries and open comments sections of the surveys are interpreted in order to determine the qualitative axes of live music audience experience. We ask whether it is possible to find a common currency, or at least a system of exchange, for the different valuing of the goods that audiences ascribe to their live music experiences.



Second, the audiences for each case study concert are then compared using the quantitative responses gathered in the surveys to determine whether the venue has multiple, disparate, audiences or whether, despite the range of musical genres promoted at the venue, it makes sense to speak of a 'Queen's Hall audience'.

### *Qualitative axes of live music experience*

We identified a set of qualitative axes (noted in italics below) in audience members' experiences and expectations. Ways of experiencing and, importantly, expressing value differed across genre – but there were commonalities. We do not suggest that these are fully inclusive, nor deny that the possibility of overlaps. Rather, the axes point towards the common sentiments across different constituencies. Across genres – and between individual audience members – proximity to the artist can be set against the overall scale of the event, or to put it another way, the experience of *intimacy* vs *spectacle*. Due to its size and unique architectural features as a former church, the Queen's Hall was praised by audience members across genres for being able to provide an intimate experience with the artist and a feeling of closeness – people want to be in the presence of a favourite performer, but they also want to be able to *see* music being made. Some audience members are amateur musicians and want to witness professional performers make music as a way of educating themselves to improve their own music making. On the other hand, some audience members cited spectacle as an important part of performance – the notion of putting on a show, expensive sound and lighting equipment, and a theatrical performance from the artist to augment the music in a way audiences cannot experience in their own home.

Audiences noted the value of the *unique atmosphere and character* of a venue like the Queen's Hall, but on the other hand, they also had a certain expectation of the *predictable, smooth and comfortable* running of a show. A modern building with state-of-the-art facilities may be valued for providing a smooth-running experience, comfort and precision. This can be set against the less easily definable, but keenly felt, attribute of 'character' imparted by historical buildings, which may have more quirks and perhaps less physical comfort but which impart a different sense of satisfaction to do with the charm of a unique performance space. These two values are not necessarily in opposition, but it is worth noting that some of the characteristics that make Queen's Hall unique (such as the pillars and pews in the performance space) are also those that are a source of annoyance for some audience members. Broadly, however, the Queen's Hall occupies a space between the logistically refined operations of a purpose built venue and the 'character' of smaller venues which, while appealing to segments of the popular music audience might be off-putting to the older demographic (e.g. clubs and venues on the so-called toilet circuit).<sup>3</sup> 'Character', in other words, need not mean standing room only, sticky carpets or crumbling walls while *gravitas* and history need not be the province solely of larger scale buildings.

Some audiences enjoy the possibility of *surprise and the unexpected* in live music (hearing music they are not familiar with, such as a support act or a premiere of new repertoire), while others merely want to enjoy *confirmation of already held tastes*. Both views can be contained within the same concert: some SCO audience members noted they did not like programming of new contemporary repertoire alongside established classical works, while others enjoyed this aspect of the performance.

Across the board, participants attach a value to *becoming immersed* in the live music event. But ways of engaging with the music vary greatly – from rapt silence to noisy sing-alongs, intense mental concentration to the physical exertion of dance. As Christopher Small (1998, p. 9) points out in explaining the concept of ‘musicking’, music is an activity, not a thing and ‘to musick is to take part, in any capacity in a musical performance, whether by performing, by listening, by rehearsing or practicing...’ This inclusive concept aligns with our own findings, in which audiences frequently remarked on the value of a communal experience of music, while others noted the value of what one might call *inward participation*, of allowing live music to take one to an individual, transcendent place. Related to this are different audience behaviours of rapt attention (sitting or standing motionless, able to hear a pin drop in the performance) vs. *outward physical participation* (movement, dance and crowd participation enhancing the experience). This contrast was not necessarily correlated to normative audience behaviour conventions of classical music vs. pop music. For example, one audience member of the They Might Be Giants show reported leaving it early because she found the outward crowd participation and involvement to be off-putting.

Another point that is apparent across respondents is that despite ascribing value to different aspects of live music, they all referenced an experience that, at its best, is in some way transcendent. This might entail ‘losing oneself’, an overpowering experience of being in a crowd, reinforcing bonds with fellow audience members or immersion in the musical aesthetic. While the concert/gig does not need to attain this ‘transcendence’ to have value, it is the *potential* for that which keeps people going back – whether live music attendance is part of the fabric of their regular activities (as for an SCO subscription holder) or a special occasion (the They Might Be Giants fan who travelled the 375 miles from Bristol to attend).

The key point here is that whatever differences exist between these audience ascriptions of value, what they have in common is that what they are *not* based on is how much it cost. This is not to say that cost is not a consideration. Rather, the price of the ticket and other crucial factors – notably travel and accommodation – affect the *initial* decision of whether to go. Once that decision has been made ‘value for money’ decisions do not really apply to the perceived quality/enjoyment of the show in ways, they might to other commodities. If the show crosses that threshold into the affirming experience, then it becomes worth it in ways which are simply not equitable to the ticket price. On the other hand, if a show is a disappointment, it might not matter that it was initially viewed as being a ‘good price’.

### ***Quantitative comparison of audiences across musical genres***

Questionnaire responses tended to congregate around the middle regarding those non-musical aspects of the event that they found important (e.g. approximately a third of respondents at each concert found ‘venue’ to be ‘moderately’ important). This was partly a factor of how many tickets the concert had sold – and hence how many people were in the building (although at least 10% of each audience completed the survey). It also, however, related to the relationship that different constituencies – and different promoters – had to the Queen’s Hall. The SCO audiences were particularly ‘at home’ in the venue. Since many of them hold subscriptions, attendance at the Hall is a regular part of their social calendar – leading to different patterns of behaviour regarding the survey and use of the building. The traffic flow

of people in the building for a sold out rock show (They Might Be Giants) where more alcohol was consumed, for instance, meant that proportionately less attention was paid to the survey.

However, a few key points did emerge and here the most striking difference was the extent to which the rock/pop audience identified most strongly with the artist in the show rather than genre. Respondents were asked 'Which is more important to you – this particular act, or the style of music they are playing?' with a five point response scale from 'artist much more important' to 'style of music much more important'. Percentages of those who found the 'Artist much more important' – of the Bain/Cunningham audience was 27.5%, of the Heidi Talbot audience was 19.5%, of the SNJO audience was 21.7%. The most marked difference was between the SCO audiences of whom only 4.1% found the artist the most important reason for being there compared to the They Might be Giants respondents, of whom 61.5% found the artist much more important than the style of music they were playing.

Other disparities emerged regarding the 'social' vs. 'intellectual' reason for being at the event. Audiences were asked to rate (again on a five point scale) how important aspects other than the music were to their experience of the concert on the night. 'The people I'm with' was rated as 'extremely important' or 'very important' by 78% of the Bain/Cunningham audience, 70.7% of the Heidi Talbot audience, 80.8% of the They Might be Giants audience, 70% of the SNJO audience and, markedly lower, 49.64% of SCO respondents.

Similarly, regarding important factors 'in general' as reasons for attending live music, classical audiences marked 'intellectual stimulation/expanding my horizons' as more important than others, with jazz not far behind. 81.38% of SCO respondents rated intellectual stimulation as 'extremely' or 'very' important, against 73.3% at the SNJO concert, 61.5% at They Might be Giants, 45% at Cunningham/Bain and 46.3% at Heidi Talbot.

These points of difference, however, are most revealing when viewed in the context of other aspects of the research. The fact that several discourses are at play (for example, art discourse, folk discourse, pop discourse as outlined by Frith 1996), as expressed in the diaries and focus group, is supported by the surveys, especially in the qualitative responses at the end, where comments tended to echo the language of the ineffable found in interviews and diaries when people were asked about 'intrinsic' value. The type of language used in the qualitative answers suggests that the struggles to quantify cultural value expressed by interviewees are felt more widely.<sup>4</sup>

It is also important to note that the time and place in which the questionnaires were filled out suggests that audience members' perceptions of the questions and terms used varies and can affect the answers. For instance, SCO respondents' answers suggested that social bonding was less important to them. But the behaviour we observed in the hall, their easy familiarity with one another and with the environment, suggested otherwise – especially if taken alongside the matter of subscriptions and regular attendance. In other words, being at an SCO, concert was less of a 'special occasion' for these respondents than for those at They Might Be Giants, and socialisation consequently less likely to feature aforesight regarding the survey. But observational evidence from the SCO concerts nevertheless suggested that they are part of the fabric of their audience's routines and lives, something which was confirmed by the diary entries. The surveys, then, were mainly useful in supporting other data, and it is in people's observed behaviour and

qualitative responses that the nuances of their experiences were to be found. A key aspect here was the difficulty in expressing quantitatively the value which audience members attach to specific aspects of the live music event. In this context, 'value' is less a 'good' derived from the event that can be easily measured than it is a 'process' imbricated in the social and psychological transactions across it.

What the survey results *do* indicate is an abiding affection – particularly amongst the classical, jazz and folk audiences – for the Queen's Hall that can be mapped across the qualitative axes discussed earlier. It rates highly amongst performers and audiences for 'intimacy' and 'character' both in the performance space itself and in the venue as a whole compared to what one performer referred to as the 'rabbit warren[s]' of some larger venues.

What makes the Queen's Hall distinct is its occupation of a space between commercial venues and those more traditionally associated with the state subsidised sector. Classical audiences make little distinction between the Hall and their musical preferences – it is the long-established home of the 'act' they go to see. In the less directly subsidised forms of music (notably jazz), the Hall is still a central plank in provision for the city. This also stems partly from its age and 'status'. It has prestige as an old building, and official sanction implicit in that it receives a degree of financial support from the council and other state bodies. It receives grant support from the City of Edinburgh council, of just under £100,000 per annum, as well as support from Creative Scotland (formerly the Scottish Arts Council), although both of these sources have been frozen or reduced since 2011 (Queen's Hall 2011, p. 7). This is part of a wider pattern of cuts to the arts within the UK.

Despite the fact that public money accounts for only 13% of its income, with the rest from hires (52%), bar and catering (22%) and fundraising (13%) (Queen's Hall 2012, p. 15), some cultural capital accrues from this, marking it off from purely commercial enterprises. It is therefore also a neat fit as a site for the arms length subsidised acts (especially larger ones like the SNJO, for whom a club space is not appropriate). But it also aligns with a particular segment of the more purely commercial sector – 'rising' acts, or those with a niche market. In this respect, it also plays to a slightly older demographic – an audience perhaps not large enough to fill bigger Edinburgh venues – but who, even at a rock gig, would want more comfort than commonly afforded by more typical (and perhaps less salubrious) 'rock' venues.

To an extent, then, it *is* possible to talk about a 'Queen's Hall' audience – or at least a subset of it – as distinct from the jazz, traditional, classical constituencies with which it might most easily be associated at first. To return to our binaries – the Queen's Hall experience is closer to intimacy than spectacle, but with elements of the more formal milieu that a club venue lacks. This audience can be characterised as those music fans that still want to go to 'gigs' rather than 'concerts' – which means that there is a mix with people from the slightly younger crowd in their 20s and 30s who will still also be heading to club gigs – but have eclectic tastes. It therefore serves a constituency of self-described 'music lovers' that is demographically varied and attracted to music that, while not directly subsidised, is at the less numerically 'popular' end of the commercial music spectrum.

To summarise, the findings from our case study analysis can be divided into qualitative axes of live music experience and quantitative comparisons of audiences across musical genres. However, there are three additional insights which cut across these two categories. First, live music audiences at the Queen's Hall share certain

characteristics. There is an identifiable Queen's Hall constituency that the venue attracts which cuts across musical genres. Audiences also value shared elements of the live music experience across genres, and many audience members refer to a live music experience that, at its best, is somehow transcendent. Second (and despite the shared characteristics noted above), people attend live music for diverse reasons that do not necessarily match up even though they are at the same event, and which also do not map easily onto genre stereotypes (e.g. quiet attentive listening for classical music vs. rowdy behaviour at rock concerts). Third, traditional definitions of 'value' are not fit for purpose when it comes to describing the cultural value of live music: value for money decisions do not necessarily apply to a live music experience in ways they might to other commodities; the instrumental value of live music may be easier to measure than its intrinsic value, but instrumental value always derives *from* intrinsic value and is not a measure *of* it; and finally, 'value' is perhaps best conceived not much as a *good* as it is a *process* which those who attend a concert enact.

### The Queen's Hall and music policy

The findings from our research have policy implications in a number of areas. These relate to questions of intrinsic and instrumental value and to our findings that articulations of such values can be seen as being both and shared different and as being articulated around live music in ways which go beyond every day notions of 'value'. While sometimes opaque, these articulations do have practical implications.

Our research found that expressions of cultural value were relatively unaffected by the type of promoter staging the event. Audience responses were common across events regardless of whether the promoter was an enthusiast, state or commercial one. What mattered more was the broad genre, as illustrated by the artist on a given night, and the expectations of artists and audience behaviour which flowed from this. This might entail various types of audience participation— from rapt attention to dancing – but in every case, the value attached came from being taken out of the ordinary and mundane and being transported elsewhere. This can be seen as being something intrinsic to the music which has the capacity to move audiences in ways which go beyond simple economic rationales. This applies, of course, to other arts and cultural activities. Yet live music – which can provoke physical as well as emotional responses – starkly illustrates a wide range of potential impacts.<sup>5</sup> Implications of this affect a number of stakeholders.

The first of these is obviously within our case study venue. The Queen's Hall is a charitable trust overseen by a Board of Governors which appoints the chief executive responsible for running the venue. The continuance of the Hall as a venue is the main concern here and the warmth and esteem which the venue generates obviously has potential to assist in its continued existence. We certainly gathered enough endorsements to provide for publicity, while also raising issues which the venue needs to consider.

Such endorsements might well find their way into marketing materials and it is perhaps here that our work might have the most direct impact. What becomes clear is that audiences think not only about the music they are going to hear, they also think about the place in which the event is taking place. For example, will it enable the sorts of transcendence prized by our respondents? For the venue, this may mean producing publicity materials which emphasise its intimacy, character and

uniqueness so that audiences know that not only can see a particular artist or attend a particular series of events, but also that they will be doing so in an atmosphere which is unlikely to be repeated elsewhere.

More broadly the policy implications concern those agencies with which the venue interacts, especially within three areas of government – local, Scotland and UK. Questions of cultural value are on the policy agenda at each of these levels and the experience of the Queen's Hall has the potential to illuminate its discussion. The value placed on the venue itself and on the activities within it both suggests that agencies responsible for cultural provision can articulate value in ways which go beyond the instrumental.

At a local level, the venue's relationship with Edinburgh City Council goes beyond routine interaction over regulation to incorporate cultural provision. Since the incorporation of the Edinburgh International Festival in 1947, the city has become a 'festival city' with a great deal of its cultural provision taking place in the weeks around the Festival and its fringe in August. That month sees every performing space in the city booked. However, it is realised that the success of the festivals is built on venues which have to be maintained for the rest of the year.

In many ways, the Queen's Hall is a paradigmatic case of this. Heavily used during the festivals period, it needs to be maintained year round and the City Council has a role to play in ensuring this. Here the city may be able to learn from Australia where places such as Brisbane, Melbourne (Carbines 2003) and Sydney (City of Sydney 2013) have set up task forces to look at their cities' live music infrastructure and various issues surrounding it. In the case of Sydney, this has resulted in a set of 57 recommendations which have been embraced by the city's mayor and seem set to form the basis of policy in forthcoming years. What is clear here is that local authorities who investigate their local music ecology come to realise the inter-connectedness of venues. Edinburgh has lost a number of much cherished venues over recent years including The Venue, the Tap O' Lauriston and, amid much media coverage, the Picture House. While the impact of these losses has not been assessed, it is clear that local authorities can audit and make provision to facilitate live music. This need not involve subsidy and can incorporate 'cutting red tape' such as public entertainment licences. Any such review in Edinburgh would provide a clearer picture of how the Queen's Hall fits in the city's broader live music ecology and could be informed by our own findings.

While feeling the impact of various decisions the Scottish Government makes, the Queen's Hall has comparatively little direct interaction with it. The SCO is directly funded by the Scottish Government but is due to leave the Hall in the medium term. However, the policies of the arms length arts funder Creative Scotland can have a more direct impact. While funding from Creative Scotland makes up only a small part of the Hall's income, organisations in receipt of Creative Scotland funding can hire the Hall and the organisation's own policies can affect the Hall. To give just one example of this, in 2013, Creative Scotland published the findings of research, it commissioned into the state of the country's music sector (Ekos 2013). One of the recommendations of this report was that 'There is a need.... to address the lack of a flexible mid-scale venue in Edinburgh' (Ekos 2013, p. 121). This may be true. However, given the ecological nature of live music, the provision of such a venue would impact on the Queen's Hall and the implementation of such policies should not be done without considering their impact on existing provision.



At a UK level, once again the Hall feels the impact of various policies such as VAT rates and rules regarding working by foreign musicians. However, again the most important factors are indirect. Here the policies of the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF), which funds various forms of heritage projects, become crucial. The Hall lacks suitable backstage facilities and is in need of renovation in others. Here the NLHF offers some prospect of funding which would help to secure the Hall's future. However, previous applications for Lottery and Creative Scotland funds for refurbishment have been unsuccessful and the fate of future bids is unclear. Thus, the future of the Hall remains partly contingent on policy elsewhere.

Overall, it can be seen that the results of our research have policy implications first within the Hall's own policies, especially in relation to marketing, and, secondly, in its dealing with key outside agencies. The non-instrumental value placed on live music by our respondents do not translate simply into policy. However, the *language* used by respondents can inform policy. Policy makers therefore need not only to resist political imperatives to assess all art in instrumental terms, but to understand those attributes, which make up intrinsic value and the ways in which audiences come to conclusions about intrinsic value. In practical terms, this means thinking through the different ways in which audiences reach and experience transcendence, as well as a realisation that this can differ within the same audience. If policy is related to quality of life, then the qualitative judgments made by respondents can take discussion of arts policy beyond the instrumental. Transcendence does not necessarily *have* a market value.

## Conclusion

This article has outlined an attempt to move discussion of arts policy beyond the instrumental. We began by discussing the differences between instrumental and intrinsic versions of arts policies, before moving on to discuss our case study and its policy implications. Our respondents were clear that they went to music to *forget* about monetary concerns and to have a transcendent experience. The fact that that experience had to be paid for did not concern them much. Above all, they showed that all talk about the value of artistic activity remains abstract until that art is experienced. When it is, the value ascribed goes well beyond the merely economic. Obviously neither venues nor policy makers can avoid the economics of the situation, in particular to ensure their continued provision. But a key means of addressing, this is to continue to provide the sorts of transcendent experience that audiences desire – to attract either commercial custom, state support or a combination of both. There was a clear sense from our research that engaging with art was part of what it is to be truly human insofar as it gives meaning to a wider range of often more quotidian experiences. Any policy which fails to recognise this is unlikely to assist the Queen's Hall or, indeed, anyone else.

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## Notes

1. Wendy Fonarow's work (2006) on indie music, for instance, contains valuable insights into 'zones of participation' but is specific to indie music and the, mostly standing, spaces in which they take place. The Queen's Hall, by contrast, has fixed seating. Although the central part of the auditorium is sometimes cleared for standing or dancing, Fonarow's 'zoning' model applies less easily than to the more explicitly commercial venues she discusses.
2. The concerns of venue staff were primarily logistical. Insofar as they noted the differences between audiences, these were often referred to in terms of how they would manage the crowd in terms of staffing allocation, late entry or behaviour at the bar.
3. The 'toilet circuit' is a colloquial term used in the UK to refer to small-scale, often independently run venues which are historically characterized by, among other things, the use of the (often unsavoury) public toilet as the artist's dressing room.
4. Similar struggles were evident in our interviews with musicians, venue staff and promoters.
5. Many of these other sites and types of cultural value are explored in the broader project of which our examination was a part.

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